

Amendments to the Claims:

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine including;
a body through which a stuffing tube covered in casing may pass,
a casing engaging means that engages said casing as the shirring machine is pushed along said stuffing tube from its discharge end so that said casing is drawn onto said stuffing tube and that disengages from said casing when it is pulled in the opposite direction, and

grasping means for grasping said shirring machine to manually move it back and forth along said stuffing tube.

2. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said casing engaging means includes a plurality of annular segments arranged about the circumference of said stuffing tube.

3. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said casing engaging means includes a plurality of fingers pivotally attached to said body arranged about the circumference of said stuffing tube.

4. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 3 wherein said fingers are connected to a continuous circumferential spring biased to draw said fingers towards said stuffing tube.

5. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said casing engaging means includes a spring mounted member located in a tapered section on said body wherein as said member slides longitudinally with respect to said body within said tapered section said member is forced to grip the casing when said member is moved in one direction and release the casing when said member is moved in an opposite direction.

6. (Currently amended) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in ~~of any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein said body is tubular.

7. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 1 wherein said body includes a first tubular section having disengaging means, a second tubular section having casing engaging means interfacing with said tapered portion,

wherein first and second tubular sections are slidably movable a predetermined distance relative to each other so that said casing engaging means is forced to grip said casing when said first and second tubular sections are slid apart from each other and disengaging means acts upon said casing

engagement means to release said casing when said first and second tubular sections are slid towards each other.

8. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 7 wherein said casing engaging means includes a plurality of annular segments arranged about the circumference of said stuffing tube.

9. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claims in claim 7 said casing engaging means includes a plurality of fingers pivotally attached to said second tubular section arranged about the circumference of said stuffing tube.

10. (Original) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 9 wherein said fingers are connected to a continuous circumferential spring biased to draw said fingers towards said stuffing tube.

11. (Currently amended) A hand operated shirring machine as claimed in ~~any one of the preceding claims~~ claim 1 wherein said grasping means include a pair of handles.

12. (Currently amended) A method of loading casing onto a stuffing tube comprising including the steps of:

inserting a tapered mandrel into a discharge end of said stuffing tube;

drawing an end of said casing over said mandrel and sliding said end of said casing onto the discharge end of said stuffing tube; ~~and~~

bringing the hand operated shirring machine as claimed in claim 1 onto the end of said stuffing tube; and

manually operating ~~the~~ said hand operated shirring machine ~~as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11~~ to draw casing onto said stuffing tube forming a region of bunched casing away from said discharge end of said stuffing tube.

13-15. Cancelled